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## Rare child porn trial to begin

### Accused refuses plea deal, faces 44-count indictment

Gary Craig  
Staff writer

(April 23, 2006) — When Donald Anson enters a courtroom in the Kenneth B. Keating Federal Building on Monday, he will become the first defendant to be tried on child pornography charges in U.S. District Court in Rochester in more than two decades.

The case against the 50-year-old Rochester man will include the graphic, disturbing images that prosecutors say were found on his computer and computer disks; testimony from computer experts who'll attest that the images are of real children and not computer-manufactured portrayals; and testimony from law enforcement officials from across the country who know some of the youths who were photographed while being molested.

Federal judges in Rochester say they've never had a child porn case go to trial in the past 20-plus years. Authorities say they expect to see more in the future because of the spread of child pornography over the Internet and because moves to toughen sentences for the crime may discourage defendants from taking a plea.



enlarge

JAMIE GERMANO staff photographer  
Donald Anson leaves the federal building after a hearing this month on child pornography charges against him. On Monday, his case goes to trial - the first in the area in more than 20 years.

Day in Photos

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Meanwhile, the uniqueness of this case has court officials concerned about the difficulty of seating a jury that can render an impartial verdict after viewing images of children being sexually abused.

"The court anticipates that jury selection in this kind of case will take longer," U.S. District Judge Charles Siragusa said in one pretrial hearing. " ... It will involve unusual issues."

In preparation for a lengthy jury selection, court officials are calling in an unusually large pool of more than 200 people and using the two largest courtrooms in federal court by having a video feed from one room to the other.

Court records show that Anson was offered plea bargains — the typical resolution to child pornography charges — but he insisted that he be tried instead.

Anson faces a 44-count indictment that includes charges of receiving, possessing and transporting child pornography. Prosecutors say in court papers that they will introduce 14 images they allege Anson uploaded from a child pornography online sharing site, as well as images from 39 computer disks found in Anson's home. The CDs, prosecutors allege, contained "thousands of images of child pornography."

#### Case covers distance, time

The investigation that led to the home and computer of Donald Anson started, like many child pornography investigations, far away. In 2003, federal authorities discovered that a company based in the eastern European nation of Belarus was serving as a credit card processing company for Internet operations offering child pornography. The company, Regpay Co. Ltd., had processed more than \$3 million in credit card payments, most of them for child pornography, authorities said.

That year, U.S. and European authorities dismantled Regpay, indicting the Belarusians who ran the operation. Authorities then began tracing the distribution of the child pornography through credit card receipts and Internet pathways.

One of the men they determined was buying child porn through an online sharing service was Anson, who lived at 121 Grassmere Park in Rochester.

About 7:30 a.m. June 2, 2004, U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, wielding a search

#### Child porn cases

Child pornography arrests have increased in recent years. Among recent Rochester-area cases, none of which went to trial, were:

- Catholic priest Michael Volino, who admitted to looking at child pornography on a computer at the Catholic Diocese. Volino was sentenced in December to 15 months in federal prison.
- Julius Goepp, a former emergency room pediatrician. Goepp was sentenced to probation after he was able to prove to a federal judge that he had stopped looking at pornography and undergone counseling before his computer was seized by authorities and he was arrested in 2004.
- James Comfort, who was sentenced to 10 years on federal charges. Comfort is also imprisoned for raping underage girls he met over the Internet.
- Ronald Sheffer, a former Monroe County sheriff's deputy who was sentenced to 10 years of probation on state charges. Sheffer maintained that he disseminated child pornography through his office computer in an unauthorized attempt to find child predators.
- Retired Gates Chili teacher David Coriddi, who was sentenced to 10 years of probation on state charges.

#### Federal sentences

Federal sentences on child pornography call for:

- A five-year minimum and 20-year maximum for transportation of child pornography.
- A five-year minimum and 20-year maximum for receiving child pornography.
- A 10-year maximum for possession of child pornography.

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warrant, visited Anson's home. Anson admitted that he had child pornography and led the agents to the CDs in his home, according to an affidavit from agents.

ICE agent Timothy Kosinski said in a pretrial hearing that Anson was particularly fearful that his family might find out about his "lifestyle."

Agents took Anson into custody on the spot because they were worried "he would do something to hurt himself," Kosinski said.

Authorities in June 2004 charged Anson with possessing and receiving child pornography. A federal magistrate judge, with the consent of federal prosecutors, allowed Anson to return home while awaiting trial. He was ordered to stay away from minors and computers.

Anson was to return to court July 2, 2004, for a preliminary hearing. He didn't show.

A month later, authorities found him in Florida and arrested him there. His indictment also includes a count of bail-jumping.

#### **Gentle, caring son**

In letters to a federal judge, Anson's friends, neighbors and family members have portrayed him as a gentle man who constantly helped his aging parents in their dying days. (Both are now deceased; Anson's Grassmere Park home is their former residence.)

"I have never known Don to have a 'dark side' and I attribute his current problems to a poor choice of friends and acting impulsively," one family friend wrote in a letter in court papers.

Court records show that Anson does not have a criminal record but was facing a drug-related charge in another state when he was arrested on the child pornography charge.

A 1973 graduate of John Marshall High School, Anson has held numerous jobs, including working in a sneaker warehouse and as a McDonald's restaurant manager, according to court records.

Anson likely fled after his June 2004 arrest, his brother wrote in a letter to a judge, because he'd been told by his lawyers that he was facing decades in prison.

Anson considered representing himself at trial, but Siragusa last week convinced him that his defense could suffer if he represented himself because he was unfamiliar with federal laws.

Anson's third and current attorney, Mark Uba of Buffalo, declined comment for this story.

Anson has written numerous letters to judges who have handled his case, complaining about his legal representation. Anson has lamented that "it's the rest of my useful life that's on the line."

**Pleas less likely**

If convicted, Anson could spend the rest of his life in prison. Each of the 40 counts of child pornography possession carries a 10-year maximum sentence; the other pornography-related counts carry 20-year maximums.

Federal authorities say recent congressional moves to stiffen sentences for child pornography may prompt more defendants to choose trials.

In 2003, for instance, Congress passed the Protect Act, designed to strengthen the protection of children and to toughen the punishment for those who molest children or view child pornography.

"There's not much of an advantage to pleading guilty these days because the (sentencing) guidelines are so high," said Albany-based Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Spina.

He said he has prosecuted federal child pornography cases for 15 years and has never had one go to trial.

With the advent of the Internet, child pornography trade has exploded. Child porn used to be purchased from the back pages of seedy magazines and sent through the mail. Now it is a mouse-click and a credit card number away for those who can navigate the Internet.

When he first began prosecuting child pornography cases, he handled two cases a year, Spina said. Now, he helps to process almost 70 child pornography search warrants a year.

"I'm in one (regional) district and one satellite office in that district," he said. " ... This year I've seen cases with images that even bothered me, and I've been doing this so long."

Authorities say that child pornography images are growing more graphic and violent. More and more images are showing the molestation of infants, authorities say.

Advocates for tougher sentences say that the very term "child pornography" dilutes the nature of the crime.

"These are real images of child sexual abuse," said Danica Szarvas-Kidd, a staff attorney with the American Prosecutors Research Institute National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse. "These aren't just nudie photos that are triple-X."

Among those giving testimony against Anson is expected to be a retired Beaver Dam, Wis., police investigator, who helped crack a child molestation ring there that filmed the abuse for dissemination over the Internet.

In 2003, investigators learned that a man who'd first arrived as a trinket salesman at the county fair had rented a home, befriended young boys, and eventually offered them as sexual victims for men who traveled from across the country to Beaver Dam, authorities say.

Wisconsin-based Assistant U.S. Attorney William Roach, who prosecuted the men involved in the Beaver Dam child porn ring, said he'll never forget the interviews with the children who were molested and filmed. Those same images, court papers allege, were among those viewed by Anson.

"When you actually meet the child (pictured in the pornography) ... it makes it all the more real," Roach said.

And the images from that single child porn ring still circulate on the Internet, Roach said.

"We'll never be able to retrieve them all," he said. "It just isn't going to happen. I can't imagine any way of being able to recover them all."

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## Some say child porn users often also are molesters

Gary Craig  
Staff writer

(April 23, 2006) — With the vast growth in child pornography on the Internet, and the jump in the number of child pornography arrests and convictions, an often-asked question remains tough to answer: Are those who enjoy child pornography likely to molest children?

Law enforcement authorities say there is a connection, while therapists who treat sex offenders claim the research is, to date, murky.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service says that research shows about a third of those who watch child pornography have molested children. Research at a North Carolina federal prison, which treats sex offenders, also concluded there is a significant likelihood that a person who uses child pornography will molest a child.

Some pedophiles fuel their attraction to children by viewing child pornography, while others use the pornography to sate their appetite and not act upon their desires, said Michael McGrath, a forensic psychiatrist with Unity Health System in Rochester.

The unusual sexual desire for children is something that many of these men — and research shows most child pornography users are men — often carry throughout their lives, McGrath said.

"For the most part, one's sexual orientation, what turns you on, is hard-wired into you."

Authorities say that child pornography cannot be viewed as a victimless crime because children are abused for the images.

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Worldwide, children have been molested for images and videos still circulating on the Internet, authorities say.

The federal case against Donald Anson will include testimony from authorities who have cracked child pornography rings and interviewed the young victims.

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